



Stranger Things 4 by chr1ssy-x

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Fantasy, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Characters: Eleven/Jane H., J. Hopper, Mike W., Will B.

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2019-09-25 01:06:53

Updated: 2019-10-02 16:09:44

Packaged: 2019-12-12 17:39:40

Rating: M

Chapters: 2

Words: 6,709

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: It's been three and a half long months since that July 4th night. The kids have started high school and El and Will are experiencing strangely connected nightmares. Russians, Demogorgons, and Hopper? What could this mean? El must figure out what's going on and when she does, one thing leads to another and the gang discovers that they aren't so safe from the Upside Down, after all.

1. Chapter 1: 4:02AM

My take on what season 4 would be, with some slight alternate endings to season 3. No giving them away here, though. Read on, if you're curious! ;)

STRANGER THINGS 4

Chapter 1: 4:02AM

Kamchatka, Russia

October 17th, 1985

9:02PM

"нет, не американец."

The unbearably stale smell of blood filled the air constantly and the foreign letters that piled from each guards mouth just drove him absolutely insane. What were these bastards saying? If only they had captured Murray, too. He would have had a translator by his side and someone to conjure up the perfect escape plan. He wasn't even quite sure how long he'd been trapped here. All that he knew was the food tasted like absolute shit and he only got to shower once in a great while. He wasn't too sure, considering he couldn't even account for the days. Jim Hopper had been captured by evil Russians and he wanted to laugh so hard every time he thought about it and *no*, he wasn't crazy for that. I mean, really? Who would ever believe someone if they said they were captured by evil Russians because you were standing in the way of their twisted and world shattering plans? Jim had no idea that the passed 2 years of his life would become this crazy and now everyone back home thought he was dead, for sure. He didn't need to know what day it was, to know that was true.

He needed a way out and he needed one fast. These Russian soldiers were relentless and he knew they had a hungry Demogorgon locked away somewhere behind these rotted walls. He could hear the screams of all the other prisoners as they faced it, looking into the

eyes of their death. It left him unnerved to know that one by one, these prisoners were dying and no new ones were being hauled in. And that thing ate in numbers...

It was only a matter of time before he was next.

Hawkins, Indiana

October 17th, 1985

4:02AM

Her heart was banging behind her ribcage and sweat trickled down her forehead as she tossed and turn furiously before her eyes shot open. Flashes of that night behind her closed eyelids haunted her and for some reason that she couldn't explain, she would have these disgusting and vile nightmares of Hopper and how he died that night. Every morning at the same time she would shoot up from her bed in a cold sweat, gasping for air and afraid. It started to happen about 4 days after he died. Will and El shared a room, now that she was living with the Byers and the house wasn't going to get any bigger. Weirdly enough, Will would have nightmares around the same time every morning and they would awake in unison. Will's nightmares were different, though. El remembers the first night it happened to them. Joyce had never explained to El exactly how it happened, but she knew it was traumatic enough to keep Joyce from speaking of it. So the nightmares were her head conjuring up their own ideas of how it happened and every night it was something different...

July 8th, 1985

4:00AM

Thump, thump, thump...

Her heart raced faster and faster as the minutes passed and she looked around at total darkness, trying to see something, anything. There was nothing in sight, just pitch black. That's when she heard it. The eerily familiar sounds of the creature she has faced so many times before. She wasn't very sure what to call this sound; a growl? A sneer?

She snapped out of her thoughts and as she blinked, suddenly she was in

the cabin she came to know and love. It was exactly how they left it four nights ago. Bugs had started to find their way in through the giant tear in the roofing. Pieces of wood were rattling in every other corner of the living room. A mess was what they had left, but Joyce wouldn't ever step foot on this property again, she refused. And as for El, she wanted nothing more than to go back there and just sit on the floor of her bedroom and cry and cry and never get back up. She knew she couldn't handle the clean up, either. It would hurt too much to be back there, at least for right now. So for her to be standing in the center of it, was a jab to the heart.

And there it was again, that sound. She whipped around and the creature screamed in her face, its whole head opening up to reveal rows and rows and rows of small and sharpened points for teeth. Its hot breath hit her face and suddenly it was hurdling passed her as she ducked for cover. She was confused.

And that's when she heard a completely different scream. Her heart sank and she made eye contact with him as the Demogorgon sunk its teeth into his belly, gnawing away at his flesh. She felt helpless. Even in here, her own imagination, her powers were useless. She couldn't stop this creature from tearing him apart.

It was Jim, it was her father.

His eyes pleaded with her and his fingertips shook as he extended his arm out to her, reaching up for her help. Blood spewed from his belly and splattered onto the floors and drenched his clothes. He coughed and dark red streaks made their way down the side of his face, dancing from behind his lips. He was dying in front of her and there was nothing she could do about it. She screamed and she cried and she reached for his hand.

Pitch black.

He was gone and she shot up from her sleep only to see Will staring back at her from across the room. He was distraught as well. Her head turned to the clock sitting by her bedside. The big red numbers read 4:02AM. Her eyes roamed back towards Will in confusion and curiosity crept up on her.

"El, are you okay?" Will gulped nervously as his eyes adjusted to the dark and he watched El's eyes gloss over with tears.

"No... I-I had a bad dream about Hop..." She whispered delicately into the quiet night, "Are you okay?" She wiped her eyes and spoke louder and firmer trying to take the attention away from her and the horribly vivid nightmare she had just had.

"I... I guess so. I had a nightmare, too. That the gate was being opened somewhere completely different and there were Demogorgons still running around in this dimension with us, eating everyone in its sight..." His words dripped with fear and his lips quivered as every word left them. He was scared. Will had a connection to the Upside Down like nobody else could imagine. He could sense things and feel things about this place.

"The Demogorgon was in my dream, too." El spoke softly, pulling herself up and out of her bed and walking toward Will's. She sat beside him and embraced him. Silence fell over them and they didn't speak another word. They let it be and in that moment they were just there for each other.

El blinked and glanced across the room to see Will sitting up in his bed, staring back at her like usual.

"Did you have another nightmare again?" He asked her timidly and she nodded her head, "Me too..." He sighed.

The connection between their nightmares was quite odd and just down right unexplainable. Why were they having these horrible nightmares at the same time every night? And these nightmares seemed to connect directly. El would dream about Hopper dying in a different way almost every single night, sometimes at the defeat of a Demogorgon or other times it would be the gigantic Demogorgon like creature that almost took her life that fateful night of July 4th and sometimes even Papa himself would be standing before him, but looking at her, demanding her to snap his neck with her mind in a rage to which she never responded. She just stood and watched and cried. Even if she were to do as told, her powers were gone. She couldn't do it even if he wanted her to. He would scream and scream until he couldn't take it anymore and his eyes would never leave hers as he put a bullet through Jim's head with one swift shot.

After his nightmare that first night, now Will's nightmares always take place in an underground place and he tells El it's definitely somewhere far away, because these people speak another language.

Russian. He knows it's Russian because he's done his research. Trying to pronounce some of the things these men have said in his nightmares to Dustin, who would relay it back to Robin, who seemed to be great at figuring out how to translate (and also great at code cracking). The translations would come back as talk about an American, which Will figured was himself in this nightmare. Their nightmares seemed *too* connected, sometimes.

"Can you turn on the nightlight?" El asked quietly, to which Will nodded and did as asked with no hesitation. It seemed like he was thinking the same thing. They both glanced at each other before lying back down in bed. There was always a long silence while they stared up at the ceiling, too spooked to go back to bed just yet. Slowly, but surely they would doze off and the blurry numbers on the clock on El's end table would read 4:42AM by the time she was falling back to sleep half the time. Sometimes it would take even longer. Will would always fall back to sleep before El and she hated that.

Her eyes shut began to shut slowly as her body relaxed and her breathing deepened. Before she knew it she was fast asleep again.

October 17th

8:00am

"C'mon, let's go!" Jonathan rushed Will and El into his car as he hopped in the front seat, "Now that mom is working for the police department and it's my job to get you kids to school, setting your alarms on time would be super helpful!" He huffed as he stuck the key into the ignition.

That's right. Joyce Byers was now the new chief of police in Hawkins, Indiana. She was much more pleasant in the morning, compared to Jim, but everyone there missed him more than anything. They missed him coming in 30 minutes late with a mean hangover, cigarette and coffee in one hand and a donut in the other. Joyce was no Hopper, that's for sure, but during a time like this she was what they all needed.

"We're sorry. Nightmares again last night..." El trailed off sadly as Jonathan frowned at her in the car mirror.

"I'm sorry, El. I wish I could take the nightmares away from you guys. I had a few after everything happened, but I can't even imagine what you must be going through with the nightmares you've been having. We're all here for you, always. Don't ever forget it!" El offered a weak smile at Jonathan's thoughtfulness. He was a wonderful big brother. She liked to think of them as her new family. Will and Jonathan were her brothers and Joyce was her mother. She hadn't spoken to any of them on the subject, fearing rejection and judgment. She didn't know how to approach the situation very well, either. For now, the idea of them representing a family for her was all she needed. She didn't need their acceptance or to hear them say it. It just *felt* like they were her family.

"Yeah, we're always here. You've been here for me since the nightmares started and I appreciate you for that, so I'll be here, too; whenever you need me." Will offered her a nudge to the shoulder which she smiled even bigger in response to.

The rest of the ride to school was spent in silence with the radio playing softly in the background.

It was El's first day of school, *ever*. She smiled to herself, remembering how nervous Mike had been the night before when he came by the Byers' house to see her. School had started about a month prior, but El was still dealing with the loss of Hopper and a whole new living arrangement and everything else. She just needed a bit more time before she took on a whole new challenge. Plus, she had a lot of learning to catch up on before she even stepped foot into a high school.

El looked up as the car came to an abrupt halt and there it was; *Hawkins High School*. Will and El shuffled their way out of the car and Jonathan sped off, hoping he would make it to his interview for his new job on time.

"El! Will!" They smiled at the sight of their friends. El gazed a little bit longer at Mike, noticing he was making his way toward her as she was to him. He yoked her up in his arms with a big smile on his face.

"It's your first day of school! Are you excited?" He beamed at her, making her forget about all the nightmares and stress and for just a

moment, making her forget about missing her dad extra today. She nodded at him, giggling.

"Yes, Mike." He grabbed her hand and placed a piece of paper in her palm.

"Here's your schedule. I already looked at it for you, of course. I can walk you to a few classes cause I have some classes close by to yours. We also have a study period together which is awesome; we can spend it in the library together, working on learning the complicated inner workings of high school." He joked, "And I think Max has a couple classes with you, too! So she can walk with you to those ones!"

"You are so thoughtful *and* silly." She teased him as she leaned into his arms and captured his embrace once again.

"So, are you ready to get in there?" He questioned as he pulled away and looked back at their friends, reaching out to her with an open hand.

She blinked hard and suddenly she saw blood trickling down Mike's fingertips. She looks up and she isn't outside of Hawkins High School anymore. She's back in the black void from her nightmares. Mike is still with her and then she blinks hard again and he's gone. Instead, she is looking at Hopper. Something is different, though. This isn't a nightmare. It feels like one of her visits to the void. How is this possible? She hasn't had her powers for months...

"Let me outta here, you bastards!" He screamed and pounded on a door that El couldn't see. In fact, she had no clue where this was. Just pitch black. Usually, even though she would be in the void she still knew the location of what she was looking at which gave her the ability to locate people this way. Like her sister.

She blinked hard again and he was gone and she was looking at Mike again, his hand still outstretched to her. He looked confused and stared at her questioningly before his face changed and he was staring in awe.

"El... your nose. It's bleeding." Her fingertip reached up and

connected with the skin right beneath her nostril where she felt the wetness of blood splash against her finger.

"I-I. I-" She was at loss for words and Mike was astounded. Their friends approached and everyone stared silently at El in shock.

"Your powers. They're back?" Mike whispered the question quietly.

"I... I don't know." She swallowed hard and felt the goosebumps slither across her neck and down her arms.

What she saw was nothing from her nightmares and it shook her to her core, "What's wrong. What is it, El?" Mike rested his hand on her shoulder, looking concerned.

"Let me outta here, you bastards!"

She saw him in the void, right? So... he could still be alive? *No way.*

"I don't think my dad is dead." She spoke bluntly and with confidence no matter how much her head told her it wasn't possible.

She saw him in the void. That had to mean something. El wouldn't give up until she figured it out; if her dad was alive she was going to do anything possible to bring him home.

And if she really had her powers back, there was no way she wouldn't make sure of it.

Her dad wasn't dead.

Hopefully that was a good start for you guys. If you want more then throw some follows and favs and reviews my way and I will be happy to continue! Just wanna make sure everyone actually likes it and I'm not posting it for no reason lol. And the time frame for Russia and Indiana are 7hrs apart so the glimpse we see of Jim in the beginning is also right when El wakes up from a nightmare back in Indiana. There will be a lot of hopping back and forth between time zones, but it's the same moment in time. Also, yes its suppppperrrrr corny, but Joyce decides to stay in town with the kids and takes over as chief of police. Don't ask

me how she qualified or how it happened, cause I don't know
lmfaoooo it just happened cause I said so. I like the idea of them
staying in Indiana for the 4th season instead of leaving. Felt
easier to write it this way.

2. Chapter 2: The Slug & the Brain

Okay, so I definitely started chapter one off pretty strong, but I promise you it won't be that easy. They won't confirm El's prediction of Hopper being alive right away. Let's remember that she hasn't fully gained her powers back and she also hasn't used them in months, so they won't come to her as easily as they had before. It's going to take more time and practice and it's going to slow them down from fully getting sight of Hopper and even then, they still have no idea where he is and that's where Will's nightmares tie into it! Just wanna give you an idea of how I'm going to write this before you assume that it's rushed and to the point. It most *definitely* will not be. And I tried to make this chapter a bit longer! Enjoy chapter 2, here it is! xx

Stranger Things 4

Chapter 2: The Slug & the Brain

"Okay, so let me get this straight, you went into the void and you saw Hopper?" El studied Lucas' face and he was concentrating rather hard. Her eyes scanned the group and she saw the worry flash behind each of their eyes. She didn't blame them. This could mean something bad was coming and they had no idea what it was. That was probably the scariest part. She could tell as much as everyone wanted Hopper to be alive and for El to see her father again, that would mean an evil was lurking not far behind and none of them wanted that. Not even her.

"Yes." She answered simply. Lucas sighed and looked toward everyone else, trying to process the information.

"How did you go into the void, El? Your powers are back?" Will's eyes darted back and forth between El's eyes and her hands.

"I mean, I would assume they're back, but I didn't choose to go into the void. I didn't know this was possible. It just like, sucked me in and I wasn't standing outside of the school anymore. And Mike wasn't standing in front of me anymore. It was Hop..." She spoke with such

softness at the mention of her father and she clenched her fists tightly as she felt the tears stinging at the corners of her eyes. How could any of this be possible? If he was alive, he must have thought they had all forgotten about him by now and that hurt her to think about.

"El, you need to try and use your powers." Mike deadpanned as he grabbed hold of his girlfriend's hand. She swallowed, her mouth suddenly feeling quite dry. It had been three months since her encounter with the Mind Flayer's biggest and baddest creation yet. It had been three months since it sunk into her flesh and tried to take her from her family and friends. It had been three months since it left its mark *inside* of her. After the events that took place at Starcourt mall that night, all sorts of theories had swirled among the youngsters and why their friend had lost her powers. Almost every theory pointed back to the creature that they had cut out of her leg that night. After that, her powers had drained her completely and for some reason, she was never recharged. She wanted to believe it was anything else, but it was the only thing that could have made the most sense. Every time she thought about it, it sent chills up her spine and down her arms.

"O-Okay..." El slipped her hand out of Mike's hold and looked at all her friends, nodding.

"Wait, wait... and you and Will have been having nightmares that you both think could be connected somehow?" Dustin threw his hands forward in a stopping motion, silently telling everyone to stay put. He had more questions that he needed answers to.

"Yeah..." Will scratched the back of his head uncomfortably, "I've actually gone to Robin about it for help. I've seen and heard Russian soldiers in my nightmares for some reason. It's like I'm there and they're talking about me. She translated some of the things I've heard them say in these nightmares and they always say 'the American'. I just figured that was me. For some reason, I have a strong feeling I was wrong and this American is someone we know..." Will locked eyes with El and they silently agreed; *Hopper*.

"Hopper." Max said what they were thinking and everyone nodded in agreement.

"What if it isn't, though. This is all so confusing. All of these clues and small things we're discovering point in the direction of yes, but something doesn't feel right. There is something wrong here." El could feel it nagging her deep in the back of her mind and in the pit of her stomach. *Something was wrong. Something **had** to be wrong.*

"We have to figure out what's going on. If it is Hopper, and the Russians in Will's nightmares have anything to do with it, then that means they took him for a reason. If they have any reason I wouldn't think it's a good one." Mike spoke the words that they all had tucked away in their brains. There would have to be a reason, he was right. And that was bad.

"Okay, so we're going to continue with our day and we're going to go to class like nothing happened, then we all meet at Mike's after school and figure this out. Everybody in?" Will looked around at his friends and they all voiced their agreements with him.

"All hands in."

They all found their hands overlapping each other's while they all stood, huddled together. Something big was about to happen. They could all feel it.

Later that day...

Mike's House

3:30pm

Everyone gathered around in Mike's basement, all of their eyes focused on El as she sat on the couch; quiet and concentrating. Her eyebrows knitted together and her hand shook profusely as she held it out in the direction of the Coke can. The can shook with immense force, like someone was shaking it repeatedly, trying to get the can to explode. But it didn't lift, fly, or fling across the room. It stayed put, shaking uncontrollably. El gasped for air as she dropped her hand and the can ceased all movement. She needed to catch her breath. Sometimes, she would get so caught up in trying to concentrate when using her powers that she would forget to steady her breathing, or she would forget to breathe at all. Old habits die hard.

She fell back against the couch, her fingertips tingling and that was a feeling she hadn't felt in awhile. Along with this, came an entirely new one. The scar from that fateful night had begun to sting profusely. It stung so painfully, that El found herself hunched forward, crying out in pain as she reached to touch the scar. Everyone gasped and rushed to her side as they noticed her scar pulsating.

"El! El what's wrong, what's happening!?" Mike had seen his girlfriend in pain on numerous occasions and his heart ached for her every time. He wanted so badly to take away any pain she had ever felt or could ever feel and give it all to himself, but he knew that wasn't possible. He hated to see her like this. He felt helpless. He felt like she deserved so much better than what he had to offer her, whenever they found themselves in situations such as this one, which for some reason was quite often. He couldn't do anything to help her. And to Mike Wheeler, that was absolute torture.

Her scar bubbled and vibrated until it tore itself open, oozing a color no one could quite determine. Will's eyes shut and flashes of him coughing up disgusting other worldly slugs played behind his closed eyelids. The color that oozed from El's leg was the same slimy color that enveloped around these slugs and the creatures they resided with.

And out of nowhere, one came slithering out of El's wound. The lights flickered as she screamed in utter pain and everyone's voices clashed in a frenzied bicker as they tried their best to tend to her.

"What's happening!? WHAT'S HAPPENING!?" Mike screamed as he enveloped El in his arms and held her, not knowing what else to do.

It seemed as though this mark that had been left on El that night in July had never left. It had branded her. Stripped her of her powers and burned itself into her being.

Something was definitely wrong and everyone in the room looked around at each other, coming to the realization.

Will shot up, stomping on the slug like creature, killing it instantly.

"Christmas Eve, the year I came back from the Upside Down." He blurted and everyone looked at him and waited for him continue on. He stared back nervously at everyone, realizing they were all slightly confused.

"I-I... I've seen one of these before. I coughed one up that night before dinner. It was the first night I realized something from the Upside Down was still with me. Still *inside* of me." Will felt his skin crawl as he recalled the vivid memories of the Upside Down and his connection to the other dimension.

"What does that mean?" Max eyed Will, trying to read his face. Everyone wanted to understand what this meant, but even Will wasn't sure what it meant. This was somewhat different from his experience.

"I don't know... I-I... don't know." Will gulped and he felt his hands shake and his palms sweat.

El looked up at her friends and the fear that manifested itself in her belly and throughout her chest shook her to her core, "I think this is why my powers have been gone. I think when that creature latched onto me and sunk into my leg, it put something inside of me. There's no way it's not that. It has to be." This thing likes to control everything it comes in contact with and it knows that El had been a major threat. She had the power to open and close the Gate to this world. She stood in the way of its domination of their world and the Mind Flayer didn't like that. It sabotaged her. It did this to her, because it knew without her in its way, none of them had a chance. Not Hopper, not the boys, not anyone in Hawkins, *not anyone in the rest of the world*.

Max and Lucas eyed each other nervously, "El, if that's what this is then wouldn't this mean you're infected? Like the way Will was last year?" Lucas questioned shakily.

"We don't know that so let's not jump to *any* conclusions, yet. Please guys..." Mike pleaded with his friends desperately, the worry evident in his eyes. El just couldn't catch a break. So, that meant Mike couldn't catch one either.

"I'm being *realistic* here, Mike. What else could it possibly mean?" Lucas retorted and Mike huffed in response.

"I don't care right now. I care about making sure El is okay." He spoke to Lucas with his eyes and Lucas felt his own demeanor soften and he pressed no further.

"Mike, I'm okay. It hurts, but I'm okay." El sighed as the pain subsided into a small, steady throbbing around her wound. Her eyes lingered on it and she heard Papa's voice echo in her head.

"You haven't looked for me, why? 'Cause you thought I was dead? Or because you were afraid of what you might find?"

She squeezed her eyes shut tightly.

"You have to confront your pain. You have a wound, Eleven. A terrible, terrible wound and it's festering. Do you remember what that means? It means a rot and it will grow. Spread. And eventually, it will kill you."

"GET OUT OF MY HEAD!" She felt the familiarity in her scream as soon as it left her mouth and she immediately felt all eyes on her, "S-Sorry..."

"Don't be sorry, *ever*." Mike frowned at her before he hugged her even tighter than he already was, so tight that they were both sure he thought he was going to lose her. *Again*.

She squeezed his hand to reassure him she wasn't going anywhere; never again. She wouldn't let anyone take her away from her this life where she was happy. She was just missing one thing; *Hopper*.

"Okay, but seriously guys, *what the fuck?* This is not okay! Something is wrong. We came here to figure this out. We need to figure this out." Dustin said sternly, wagging his finger at everyone surrounding him. He was tired of constantly having to fight other worldly creatures and mind controlling masses. He was fed up. He wanted this to end once and for all. If that meant pushing every single last one of them, including himself, to their limits then so be it.

"Well, clearly, there's something wrong with El and she's connected to the Upside Down or something. And we also have reason to believe

that Hop is alive and captured by the Russians. I don't really know where we go from here. I mean, what are we supposed to do next?" Will looked among his group of friends questioningly. They all stayed silent and shrugged. No one had a clue what to do now.

"My powers are slowly coming back. If I try to use them more and more, I think it hurts this thing inside of me. Like it almost drives it right out... through my leg..." El heard herself speak and thought what she had said was slightly ridiculous, but everyone else nodded in agreement. Even if she was wrong, they had to start somewhere, right?

"And we need to tell Nancy and Jonathan. We need them, they've dealt with this stuff with us before, plus Nancy knows how to use a gun..." Mike suggested and everyone was on board with it. They definitely needed someone like Nancy. Plus, both she and Jonathan could drive. That would come in handy eventually, too, "Alright, it's decided then. I'll get Nancy." Mike continued.

"NAAANCY!" Everyone looked at Mike, offering smirks and raised eyebrows across the room and a giggle from El. The mood had been lightened, but only for a brief moment.

"Mike, I could have done that myself." Lucas laughed and soon the soft and fast-paced foot steps came down the stairs and Nancy was standing at the bottom of them. El made eye contact with her and watched as Nancy took notice of her leg and the wound over her scar from that night. Nancy felt her face go white and she realized something terribly wrong was going on. She looked into her little brother's eyes and saw the pure fear and worry flash in his brown orbs.

"What's going on?" She asked, but she really didn't know if she wanted an answer now.

"We'll explain soon, but in all honesty we barely know anything ourselves. *Call Jonathan.*" Mike stressed his last few words and Nancy nodded her head and asked no more questions before she darted over to the phone on the wall in their basement.

El felt everything spinning around her and she was just now soaking

everything in. This was really happening. She would have to face an evil that was starting to become all too familiar. Why couldn't her and her friends just live normal lives? At an age like this, nothing about what they had gone through was normal. Just when she felt like she could breathe again, it seemed as though the world was against her and she felt her lungs shrinking and the air she longed so much for, disappearing. She tuned out the sound of everyone around her and she felt herself rooting firmly to the belief that her life could never be simple.

She felt her eyes wander over the freckles she came to know and love and the deepest shade of brown eyes that shined brighter than she could ever have imagined someone's eyes to shine. Mike meant more than anything else in the world to El and she felt as though all of the hardships him and their friends had experienced the passed two and half years were all her fault. It seemed likely that the Upside Down was what brought them all together, but also what would tear her and Mike apart. Leaving nothing but destruction in its trails and El wondered if being here with them and with *him* was even the right thing to do. How could she not feel guilty? How could she not be ashamed?

El thought back to the day that she saved Mike from the school bullies who tormented him and his friends and how she cried and wept and Mike looked at her like she was the only person he could ever see for who she truly was. That had scared her. What did he see? A monster?

"El!"

"Mike... I'm sorry."

"Sorry? What are you sorry for?"

"The gate. I opened it. I'm the monster..."

"No, no El, you're not the monster. You saved me, do you understand? You saved me."

No, he didn't see a monster. He saw passed that, deeper than El could comprehend. He saw the rawest bits of her being and who she was

and he understood her more than she understood herself. Even when she was this scared little girl who escaped from Hawkins Lab. Mike never folded on her and even when he did for a second, he knew it felt wrong. There was something about this girl. Mike couldn't quite understand it, but what he saw inside of El was far more than what his heart felt for her. He saw the most beautiful parts of who she was when she couldn't and he wasn't sure if she ever would. Doubt was not far behind El in almost every aspect of her life and every time El felt unsure of something, Mike was there to guide her.

No matter how much Mike felt for El and how intensely he cared for her, El couldn't help but wonder if he was just blind to the grand scheme of it all.

El opened this gate in Hawkins. Papa had pushed her and pushed her and El found herself doing things she wasn't sure of, things that scared her and made her have nightmares. Things that she still could see vividly in her mind. When El opened the gate, she unleashed something so sinister and so evil. She didn't understand it, but that didn't mean it wasn't her fault, right? El brought this rath upon an innocent town.

An innocent girl and an innocent town. Doom lurking in the shadows, but these shadows represented her, didn't they? She was the inbetween. She was the key to saving the world, but she was also the key to ending it. She hated herself for that and she didn't understand why her friends didn't or why Mike didn't.

Will had been trapped in the Upside Down because of her. Hopper was gone because of her. Billy and Barb and all the other towns people who found themselves in the palm of evil's hand were only there because of her. Finish what you started, right?

El felt like she was painfully realizing that maybe, just maybe she could only end this for good if she ended it with herself. After all, her friends and the rest of the town were never truly safe from the moment that this rift in time had been created and a warped portal between worlds was created. Maybe to stop it for good, she needed to stop *herself*.

Finish what you started... right?

El felt like maybe she needed to finish this differently than she had tried to before and the only way to finish it was to cut off the life line of this other world and evidently, it looked like she was that life line. It made sense. She opened the gate. *She is the gate. She is the Upside Down and all that it represents. Kill the brain and you kill all that it inhabits.*

El was the brain.

So, this is just a little theory that I like to think could be true in a way so I decided to dabble on El and her self-doubt and to also have her kind of come to terms with the fact that she isn't normal and that she brought on all of the stuff that's happened to her and her friends and family and that maybe she is the root of the problem. We will see where this goes now that she's kind of setting sight on this new found self discovery. Mike *definitely* isn't going to support her here lol. Also, I tried to make this chapter longer than the first, which I did, but definitely not by much. next chapter I'll try for 4k words or more, sound good? Leave opinions please, I might start setting a review goal before I post a new chapter. I will also be updating once a week, maybe twice a week depending on how my writing pans out and how much I can get done. Hope you guys enjoyed!